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Decorative Elements In Turkish Garment Culture From Past to Future: Art of Embroidery

Geçmişten Günümüze Türk Giysi Kültüründe Dekoratif Unsurlar: İşleme Sanatı

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Derleme Makale / Review Article

DECORATIVE ELEMENTS IN TURKISH GARMENT CULTURE FROM PAST TO FUTURE: ART OF EMBROIDERY

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ABSTRACT: Garment used to protect people from climatic influences in ancient times have turned into a phenomenon to decorate outer body of humans with their aesthetical pleasure as well as functionality through historical times. With the influences of covering, protection requirements, environmental factors, internal dynamics which form society (religion, race, language, customs and traditions) personality structures in process of being individual, likes and clothing with the influence in change in life and thinking style clothing takes attraction as being second skin as well as its ornamental factors. Turkish garment culture has been influenced by various factors from past to future, carrying garments embroidered with decorative features thanks to aesthetical pleasure from tradition to future. The purpose of the present study is to examine decorative elements adding an aesthetical value to what is worn as well as to development of Turkish wearing culture through its historical process. The study can describe decorative embroidery aspects applied to garments for embroidery purposes as embroidery art ornamental sewing techniques, those created by various accessories and those produced by dying-printing technique. This research study conducted on embroidery art shows that embroidery art to add aesthetical dimension is of great importance in our materialistic culture creations. Two methods were employed in the study for examining the samples of embroidery arts. The first method consists of literature scanning and the second includes museum and design examinations of designs of fashion designer Bahar Korcan's collections with her permission. Information from literature and works selected from Sadberk Hanım Museum Collection were examined for the examples of embroidery arts used in traditional clothing. Zuhul Yorgancıoğlu and Bahar Korcan's works were included in the examples where Turkish embroidery arts from past to present day were interpreted by Fashion designers.

Keywords: Embroidery arts, embroidery techniques, Turkish clothing culture

GEÇMİŞTEN GÜNÜMÜZE TÜRK GIYSİ KÜLTÜRÜNDE DEKORATİF UNSURLAR: İŞLEME SANATI

ÖZET: İnsanoğlunu önceleri dış etkilere koruyup kuşatan giysiler zaman içerisinde işlevselliğin yanı sıra estetik beğenileri ile bedeni süsleyen bir olgu haline dönüşmüştür. Korunma-örtünme ihtiyacı; çevresel faktörler, toplumları oluşturan iç dinamikler (din, ırk, dil, gelenek-görenek vb.), birey olma sürecinde ki kişilik yapıları, beğenileri, yaşama ve düşünme tarzlarındaki değişimlerin etkisiyle giysiye yeni anlamlar yüklenmiştir. Türk giysi kültürü de, geçmişten günümüze birçok faktörden etkilenecek şekilde değişim göstermiş, dekoratif unsurlar ile gelenekten geleceğe taşınmaktadır. Bu çalışmanın amacı, Türk giysi kültürünün tarihsel süreç içerisinde giysiye estetik anlamda değer katan dekoratif unsurların incelenmesidir. Giysiye süsleme amaçlı uygulanan dekoratif unsurlar; işleme sanatı, dikiş teknikleri ile oluşturulan süslemeler, çeşitli yardımcı aksesuarlarla oluşturulan süslemeler ve boyama – baskı yöntemi ile kazandırılan süslemelerdir. Bu dekoratif unsurlardan biri olan işleme sanatı üzerine yapılan bu araştırma göstermiştir ki, giysi ile birlikte ona estetik boyut kazandıran işleme sanatı maddi kültür eserleri arasında önemli bir yer tutmaktadır. Araştırmada işleme sanatına ait örneklerin incelenmesinde iki yöntem uygulanmıştır. Birinci yöntem literatür taraması, ikincisi yöntem ise müze incelemesi ve moda tasarımcıların farklı dönemlerde hazırlamış oldukları koleksiyonlardan seçilen tasarımların incelenmesinden oluşmaktadır. Geleneksel giysilerde kullanılan işleme sanatı örneklerinde literatür taramasından elde edilen bilgiler ve Sadberk Hanım Müze koleksiyonundan seçilen eserler incelenmiştir. Geçmişten günümüze Türk işleme sanatının moda tasarımcıları tarafından yorumlandığı örneklerde ise Zuhul Yorgancıoğlu ve Bahar Korcan'ın çalışmalarına yer verilmiştir. Tasarımcılar seçilirken Türk işlem sanatına tasarımlarında geniş yer veren tasarımcılar taranmış ve moda tarihi göz önüne alınarak iki farklı tasarımcı üzerinde yoğunlaşmıştır. İki farklı tasarımcının işleme sanatını yansıtırken giysi ile olan bütünlüğüne kattıkları yorum nedeniyle çalışmaya dâhil edilmişlerdir. Tasarımcılar arasında Türk giysi kültürünü uzun yıllar başarı ile temsil eden moda tasarımcısı Zuhul Yorgancıoğlu, ve son dönem moda tasarımcılar arasında farklı tarzı ve Türkiye'nin ayrı bir yöresinde unutulmaya yüz tutmuş elişlerini dünyaya tanıtmak amacıyla koleksiyonlar hazırlayan Bahar Korcan seçilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İşleme sanatı, İşleme teknikleri, Türk giysi kültürü,

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1. HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT FOR TURKISH EMBROIDERY ART

Decorative elements created for the purpose of embroidery in Turkish garment culture from Central Asia to Anatolia; are of great variety because of the aspects of daily elements, geographical and natural characteristics, interactions with other cultures and belief systems. Fabric, the basic element of the garment is enriched by a variety of patterns in the course of garment formation both during and after weaving these patterns of plants, animals, people, geometrical and abstract elements used to enrich aesthetical dimensions of what one wears. One of the most significant features to enrich garments in aesthetical appearance is art of embroidery, presenting precious examples with those techniques employed in the garment - making process.

The words, *bezek* and *bezemek* in Turkish imply embroidery decoration in almost all aspects of life processes. Put simply, it make no difference in using the above words to decorate a house, embroider garments and dresses up one's self [1].

What we know in Turkish garment culture can be obtained from manuscripts as well as works excavated by archeological studies. Knowledge of Gokturks' way of living and garment culture dates back to traveling notes and remembrance of Huan-Dzang, a Chinese Buddhist traveler, who discovered that almost all furniture and objects are covered with *sirma* (gold or silver thread) and embroidered with gold in the imperial tent of Gokturk Khan. These Golden objects and furniture dazzlingly shine on Turkish noblemen and women sitting down on carpets and kilims on the floor, with all wearing gold-embroidered silk garments ." The excavations in and around Hun kurgans in Pazyryk in 1924 by S.U.Rudenko, a Russian archeologist revealed invaluable information on ancient Turkic tribes and their way of living in Altai Mountains [2].

Turkish arts and culture whose works, garments and clothes attracted attention of nobles in European palaces with their comfort, elegance and associated embroideries.

2. ART OF EMBROIDERY IN TURKISH GARMENT CULTURE

Embroidery technique goes back to ancient wears and garments in human history. Embroidery is of great importance in a variety of decorative techniques in textile works. It is created using needle or crochet on leather cloth or any other material such as felt woven by various threads or fibers [3].

In addition to on the basic form of the garment, sleeves, pockets, belts, cuffs or any other parts can be embroidered using various techniques to decorative ends. Considering variations in Turkish garment forms through history, jackets, pants, underwear, vest, caftan, baggy trouser, head wearing and decorations boots,

slippers and footwears or shoes could be decorated and embroidered as part of daily cultural works.

Embroidery techniques fall into five groups by their styles of application;

- Needles moved on the treads of the weaving,
- Those formed by closing threads of the material,
- Those created by pulling the threads of the fabric,
- Those made by cutting threads and finally
- Those created by binding threads together

Felt and leather materials do not have warps or wefts and the process is not related to threads, therefore appliqué, *dival* and *kordon tutturma* (cord-attaching) can be used as free style needle work without counting threads [4].

Embroideries used for to decorate on garments are all typical examples such as *boncuk isi* (beadwork), *capraz igne* (cross needle), *dival isi* (gold or silver embroidery on velvet padded by cardboard), *ajur* (openwork or hemstitch), *kordon tutturma* (cord-attaching), *pul isi* (sequin work), *zincir isi* (chain stitch), *tambur isi* (tambour work), *ilme*, *suzeni*, *buldan isi* (buldan work), *antep isi* (antep work), *aplike-kapama-oturtma* (appliqué - enclosure work), *metal plaka aplike* (metal plaque appliqué), *sarma igne* (embroidery embossed), *sim sirma isi- maras isi* (gold or silver thread), *capraz ve verev igneler* (cross needle and diagonal needles), *balik sirti*, *hasir igne*, pesent, *musabak*, *tel kirma*, *harclar* (trimming), *oyalar* (needle lace), *gecme isi* (incrustation) and *kolber-baglama ignesi*.

3. EXAMPLES OF ART OF EMBROIDERY IN TURKISH GARMENT CULTURE

Among archeological works are cave wall pictures which evidently illustrate and inform on garments worn by ancient people. Daily used objects and wearings were embroidered with stylized or naturalistic patterns of step beasts against which people tried to struggle for survival [5].

The typical example to illustrate richness of Uighur culture and arts /crafts is wall pictures which enlighten us on decoration and embroideries in pieces of garments enriched with various figures made for Uighur noblemen. Koko embroideries enable us to trace back to those examples produced in 9 and 10th centuries. Figure 1 illustrates such an example in which, we can see silk – threaded *zincir ignesi* (chain stitch), *sarma isi* (satin stitch) and gold stitched, tel kirma on cotton wool garments [3].

Numerous ethnographic works from Uighur art in VIII. and IX. centuries have survived. Richly ornamented garments of noble class drawn on Uighur walls in the forms of pictures are usually made by appliqué. The appliquéed embroideries generally consist of those on cotton fabrics [6].

Uighur works were from the excavation in and around Turfan by A. Von Coq. From such Uighur works, it follows that linen clothes were embroidered with dark red, brown and black threads

using *Cin ignesi* (Chinese needle) among which occasional animal figures can be seen. *Cin ignesi* (Chinese needle) known to have been brought to Middle East by Ilhanli invaders is one of the most popular needle techniques in Turkish embroideries not known to westerners until Turkish tribes went into Anatolia. One of the Turkish embroidered techniques, *Cin ignesi* (Chinese needle) resembles *pesent ignesi* in appearance but the technique used in it is quite different from them all, in that distinct hues of the same color are used from dark tones to lighter ones in transitional combination with one other [1].



Figure 1. Koko embroidery of Uighur Turks is exhibited in Berlin Public Museum, Surur Ayten, IX.century, 1976, İstanbul.

Ceramics and miniatures generally make it possible for us to achieve knowledge of Seljuki garments, the most significant of which is *tiraz* embroidering contours of sleeves, skirt and collars.

Tiraz is defined in the dictionary of Turkish garments and embroidery by Resat E. Kocu [7].

as “those signs used for embroidery stitch with *sirma* on lines along collars, sleeves and skirt and of the garments using silk and *sirma*”

The work made in the name of Tugrul Beg in 1195 belongs to Stora Collection and exhibited in Pennsylvania Museum of Art. On this work is described palatial life with figures and patterns placed in star-shape and rectangular embroidery with borders, the distinctive feature of which is that women and men hardly differ in what they wear. However, their common aspect is that they have diadems on their heads with precious stones (gems) on the front, long hairs split half in the middle, earrings in chains and *tiraz-* banded embroidered dresses just below their knees with front openings above. Some of them are interesting with *belt* and *belts of the edges* fringes dropping down together [8].

The miniatures all supposed to belong to Mehmet Siyah Kalem and contained in The Album of Mehmed the conqueror’s in the Museum of Topkapi Palace suggest what people wore in that era. Those items in the miniatures in group IV are all a rich

collection in color and pattern as well as in style and variety, which is caused by the fact that distinct religious status of people are described. There proved to be a variety of fabrics lined with different colored material and embroidered with stars and roses called (*gulce*) using (*sirma*) and (*serpme*). Some kaftans, especially those produced with patterned cloths were embroidered with *sirma* on their sleeves, shoulders and collars in leave forms and on the skirt ends with border. These over embroidered kaftans are believed to have worn by Ottoman elite [9].



Figure 2. Gonul, Macide, This kaftan belonging to Prince-Sehzade Mehmet in XVI century was embroidered with *zerduz* (silver and silver gilt thread), embroidered with closed stitch and appliqué, 1987, İstanbul.

Another example embroidered was a kaftan of Sehzade Mehmet (Figure 2). The kaftan with long sleeves from XVI. century was produced using deep red self striped satin fabric and the lining from blue and light green satin. Clouds and three dot patterns were used in ornaments. Within the dots are tiny flowers. Upper part of the kaftan was embroidered with *zerduz* (*golden and silver thread*) using close needle and appliqué techniques. [10].

Among needle embroideries are appliqué *kordon tutturma* (cord-attaching), *dival isi* (gold or silver embroidery on velvet padded by cardboard), *kapama* (enclosure work) etc. in which the process is performed without counting any threads involved. Another practice of embroideries is appliqué. Those ornaments on felt and leather without wefts and wraps in structure have got nothing to do with any weaving threads [11].

The technique called appliqué by Europeans derived from a French word has been indeed known for millennia by Turkish communities using patches of cloths, leathers and felts in stitching and sewing processes. Metallic plates were added to leather, felt and cloth appliqué for decorations [12].

As for the way in which different materials could be performed on distinct forms of garments/dress with appliqué, the first one of such examples from Mohac Battle is a kaftan made of the leather

on which pre-cut and appliquéd patterns were sewn as embroidery (Figure 3) Both Appliqué and cutting work was used in collar and lapel of the robe. It is currently exhibited in Hungarian National Museum, Budapest, Hungary[3].



Figure 3. A caftan embroidered with appliques and cuts on leather left from military campaign to Mohac, Mohac., Dağtaş, Lütfü, Anadolu'da Dericilik, İstanbul, 2007. s: 86.

Ancient Turkish tribes created dazzling designs combining *oturma* (fixation work), a form of appliqué in addition to some other embroidery techniques. The technique of appliqué called *kertme* in Anatolia was carried through generations until today by Turcoman tribes [13].

In *Oturma* (fixation work), pieces of fabric in one color are sewn background fabric in a different hue. In *kakma* (incrustation), a type of appliqué however, patterns are cut out of the fabric, the background to sew on another contrasting fabric in the cut holes under it. Leather edges of the background are folded in and sewn to the one just beneath it. The technique *oturma* (fixation work) can create striking effects in caftans with one-color hues and their interior linings are ornamented with magnificent *oturma* - designed patterns [11].

Applique technique transferred by generations of Turkoman tribes who immigrated from Central Asia to Anatolia is called "Kertme" [14].

From Central Asia until Anatolia, Turks have created richly patterned examples of embroidery / ornamentation techniques, which have led to innovations in material and technique thanks to constantly changing technological means over time. Art of embroidery has historically kept its richness from the very past until today. It has passed through tens of Turkish civilizations in social and cultural ways of living from Uighur's, Seljuks, Ottomans and finally to Republic of Turkey.

This study emphasizes applications of traditional embroidery art in garments to determine how embroideries are made in technique and used, where and when and how they are used from

past until today and examines examples currently produced and used involving traditional embroidery techniques. Two clothings selected from a collection related to traditional women clothing of Ottoman period exhibited on the second floor of Sadberk Hanım Museum Turkish Islamic Section which is the first private Museum of Turkey where weaving and embroidery works exist were examined in addition to information in the literature. Basic point that is principally considered for the examination of clothing that are selected from museum collection is embroidery examples that present visual richness over clothing as well as the fabric. Construction techniques were determined and examined which decoratively enriches the clothing from past to present time and how and where they are used in clothes.

While a cloth in the museum collection presents examples of rich embroideries of Ottoman Period, it can be seen that they were influenced from west considering embroidery techniques and some ornamental properties.

The first example of clothing (Fig 4) selected from Sadberk Hanım Museum Collection was three - skirt loose robe from XVIII-XIX. Century. Loose Robe was embroidered using colorful yarns and silver wires in a composition formed by floral designs using winding and "suzeni" technique while it is in cloth batch form called "tepebasi" or "huseyni"[15].

Cutting properties of clothing: Rounded neck, frontal side is overall open and there is slash in sides and thighs. There is a coupe with an armhole of front part from front center to sides. Coupes were shaped according to large cutting of loose robe since fabric was not wasted for the reason that embroidery was performed on the fabric woven as cloth batch. Armhole has rectangularly cut and arms were cut with a sleeve hem shape having opening in arm elbow line.



Figure 4. Three skirt loose robe, 18.-19. century Sadberk Hanım Museum Collection, Part no: SHM 14067-K.785.

Collar of the loose robe, front center, side slashes, under arms, sleeve hems and hemlines were ornamented with a mixture of green, yellow and white silk yarns and tinsel cords. Loose robe has XVIII. Century influences for embroidery techniques and XIX. century influences for cloth cutting. [15].

The other clothing from Sadberk Hanım Museum Collection which was examined are a şalvar (baggy trousers) and a bolero from early 20th century (Figure 5). Pink Silk Woven fabric was embroidered with tinsel cord using cord fixation technique. Şalvar (baggy trouser) has a rectangular cut and sets at waistline by shrinking with a waist band [15].



Figure 5. Salvar-Baggy trouser and bolero, Early 20, Century Part no: SHM 11934-K.501.

Length of bolero extends down to waist line using stylized floral motifs around collar and on central front by cord-attaching (kordon tutturma) technique. Herring bone Balık sırtı is embroidered using gold colored tinsel thread on kaytan around the motifs.

Side of trotter is attached using two-line gimps with golden color tinsel thread embroidered by herring bone. Works in the and related literature and those examined in the collection from Sadberk Hanım Museum exhibit that processing techniques applied for embroidery in them are used in collar circumference, front section, cuffs, skirt ends, trotter sides, arm center, different sections of front and back of garment considering social status of those who wore them during the period concerned.

Current examples of embroideries keep on playing an interesting role in contemporary garment forms. Turkish fashion designers exhibit richly-designed Turkish embroideries in their collection, among whom is Zuhal Yorgancıoğlu who creates her designs and works using *maras isi* (maras work) and *antep isi* (antep work) as well as *sarma*, *verev pesent*, (cross needle and diagonal needles), *duz pesent* and *musabak* (nettedstitch), *murver* significant needle works / embroideries in *Türk isi* (Turk work), (Figure 6).



Figure 6. Nightdress design belonging to Zuhal Yorgancıoğlu. Ramazanoglu Gulseren, 1989, Istanbul.

In this nightdress by Zuhal Yorgancıoğlu, a composition composed of Turkish motifs set over silk fabrics, Turkish needlework and silver and silver gilt thread embroidery techniques were used [15].

Pattern, color and technique richness of the Turkish embroiders still continues to be an inspiration for many designers. One of new age Turkish fashion designers, Bahar Korcan forms her collections by deriving themes where she explains her philosophy. Her collection was formed with theme “rootlessness” which was presented in New York Fashion week, inspired by Mevlana Philosophy. In her collection, she employed silk, wool and brocade fabrics as well as black, ecru and talc powder colors in her designs which can be used easily in daily life.



Figure 7. Korcan Bahar, (Permission was acquired from B. Korcan).

The theme “Rootlessness” using *antep isi* on raw silk in her designs for 2004 / 05 fall / winter collection, 2004, İstanbul.

Bahar Korcan expresses her collection with theme “rootlessness” in a poem. Bahar Korcan, one of the recent young popular Turkish fashion designers attracts attention with her creations

based on the theme “Rootlessness” using *Antep isi* on raw silk in her designs for 2004 / 05 fall / winter collection.

4. CONCLUSION

Art of embroidery is a decorative / ornamental process playing a significant part in embroidering garments. It has long been surviving through all processes of human living. Of course, this value can be created and maintained only considering currently changing conditions at home and across the world. Embroideries used in garments / fabrics can be created in the course of producing the fabric itself and also after the garments have been formed. Embroidery techniques used in garments / fabrics, properties of designs, lay out of colors, composition etc. are all a subject of research in the long run. On the other hand, art of embroidery coupled with the garment on which to use patterns implies a more profound issue. This study is alleged to be the preliminary phase of such a process.

All sorts of garments exhibited in many museums and galleries at home and abroad are to be studied in form and in embroidery details. Embroidery art of aesthetical value in terms of garment shape and decorative essence has to be assessed considering technical features such as pattern, color and composition and the way and purpose of using.

It would be possible to examine in a long- term course of challenging studies Turkish garment culture and its historical process of evolution from Central Asia to Anatolia, which of course requires assistance and aids on the part of official and private institutions considering financial and bureaucratic issues involved. The present study proposes traditional embroidery art used on garments to be enlivened and perpetuated through actual designing, which is a fundamental resource to inspire Turkish fashion designers to interpret on their collections.

Numerous studies and publications have thus far been conducted and written on the embroidery works. However, any comprehensive research has yet to be implemented for the purpose of decoration on the garments concerned. Therefore, such a research is of great importance in the process of appearance and development of Turkish garment culture and in its decorative/ embroidery features.

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